

Th131 God's Plan

Lesson Th131-28 God's Love Revealed

In our last lesson we learned that all of the thousands of years, from the creation of Adam and Eve until the time of Jesus, revealed God's character to mankind. We learned of His unlimited power and intellect when we looked into the sky and marveled at the vastness of His creation. But His absolute holiness would only be revealed in His relationship with us. We learned that there was God's holiness and that there was sin. There was nothing in between.

From this we discovered that God is the Judge who rules the world in righteousness and judges with equity. God's holiness defines what law is and it is by this law that all of creation will be judged. The law demands that the person who sins shall die. Thus the grave was created as a type of prison to hold the souls of the dead. Jesus taught that the grave was divided into two places; a nice place called Paradise for those who loved God, and a place of flames called hell for the wicked.

Thus God revealed His absolute holiness to His children. But from the very moment that He pronounced judgment upon Adam and Eve in the Garden, He also promised that one day a Redeemer would come. Most of the great prophets of the Old Testament recorded prophecies concerning the coming of God's Anointed One. All of these prophecies refer to God revealing His love towards His children.

Thousands of years of human history had passed. Kingdoms had risen and fallen. The land of Israel was conquered by the Assyrians and then the Babylonians. The Babylonians were conquered by the Persians who would become the new rulers of Israel. But they too would fall when a Greek conqueror named Alexander the Great conquered all the lands from Greece to India, including the Middle East and Egypt. Alexander brought with him Greek civilization. But he died young and his empire was soon conquered by the Romans. The Roman Empire would span much of Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. The Jewish people found themselves the conquered subjects of each of these empires. Thus the Jews were not allowed to have a king from the descendants of King David.

There was a man named Herod whose family had converted to Judaism. They were from the land of Edom and were politically connected in Rome. The Roman Senate appointed this man to be the King of the Jews. He was a ruthless and violent man whom the Jews rejected, but were forced to serve. The Jewish priests and the Pharisees—who were the religious lawyers—ruled over much of the day-to-day lives of the Jews. It would be against this backdrop that God would reveal His love towards mankind.

The village of Nazareth is about 120 kilometers north of Jerusalem in the province of Galilee. There, among the 450 residents, lived a young woman named Mary. She was a virgin who had never been married nor had had any physical relations with any man. Mary had been promised in marriage to a man named Joseph, who was a direct descendent of King David. But before the wedding took place, God sent an angel to Mary with an incredible message.

“Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you,” the angel said. As you can imagine, Mary was shocked and very disturbed, first by his presence and then by what he was saying: “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

“The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.”

“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary responded. “May your word to me be fulfilled” (Luke 1:28-38). Then the angel left her.

Soon afterwards Mary discovered that she was pregnant. In a small village this would create quite a scandal. Her fiancé was a good man and did not want to see her embarrassed. While contemplating what he should do, he had an unexpected visitor. An angel appeared to him in a dream saying, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (Matt 1:20-21). So Joseph did exactly what the angel said and took Mary home as his wife.

It was during this time that the Romans decided to take a census and count all of the people who lived in their regions. They required each person to return to the city of their family’s origin to register. Now Mary was many months pregnant and ready to give birth soon. But Joseph obeyed the Roman decree, and placing Mary on a donkey, began the long trip to Bethlehem. Bethlehem, which is called the City of David, is a village about seven kilometers from Jerusalem. This journey would normally take four-to-five long days of travel from Nazareth, but with Mary being nine months pregnant, it could easily have taken a week or more.

When they finally arrived in the village of Bethlehem, they were deeply disappointed to discover that the small inn had no more rooms available. But there was a stable nearby that would protect them from the weather and give them a semblance of privacy. It would be in this stable that Jesus, the Master Designer and Creator of the universe, would be born as a lowly human being. He would not be born in a fancy palace nor sleep in fine garments upon an ornate bed. But Jesus would be wrapped in simple cloth and the feeding trough for the cattle would serve as his cradle. There would be no fancy dignitaries that would come to the stable to greet Him at His birth. Only lowly shepherds watching over their sheep on the hills outside Bethlehem would be aware of the birth of the King. Angels appearing in the sky above them would announce the birth of the King.

And thus God began His ultimate revelation to His children. Mankind had learned about God's power through creation. His holiness had been revealed through mankind's failures and sin. His absolute righteousness was experienced through His judgment of sin. Now, God would reveal to His children His perfect love.

This lesson is **important** because it introduces the demonstration to mankind of God's greatest attribute, His love. This is found in the birth of Jesus, the Son of God, to Mary.

The **main point** of this lesson is that Jesus was first called the “Son of God” by the angel that announced his birth to his mother, a virgin named Mary.

Let's **review** what you learned in this lesson.

1. Israel had been subjugated by many empires. What empire ruled over Israel at the time of Jesus' birth? [Pause 5 seconds]

A. If you said, “The Roman Empire,” you are right.

2. What was so unique about Mary becoming pregnant with Jesus? [Pause]

A. If you said, “Mary was a virgin,” then you are correct.

3. When the angel appeared to Mary, he made a number of statements. The last statement was, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called by a special title.” What was the title that the angel said Jesus would be called? [Pause]

A. If you said that Jesus would be called the Son of God, then you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** is to listen to this story at least three times or until you can tell the story of Jesus' birth and explain that Jesus was the revelation of God's love towards all of mankind. This lesson is very important because it introduces mankind to God's greatest attribute, His love.